

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 16, 17, 19-22, 24-31 stand canceled.

Claims 8, 18, 23 have been amended to independent form including all parent claim limitations including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims, in accordance with the Examiner's indication that these claims would be allowable if so amended. This indication of allowability is noted with appreciation.

Reconsideration of the remaining claims in view of the above amendments and following remarks is respectfully requested.

Claim 1 has been amended to require a layer (50) overmolded on the gear housing structure. Original claim 1 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) over Takasaki et al. U.S. Patent 6,312,821. Other rejections, including dependent claim 6, were made under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Takasaki et al. '821 in view of Rafferty et al. U.S. Patent 5,656,376. The Examiner comments that Takasaki et al. '821 discloses all of the claimed features except for ...a polymer layer that is molded around a metallic gear housing structure. In response, it is respectfully noted that Rafferty et al. '376 does not teach or suggest overmolding of the composite or laminate 130, nor does it teach or suggest an overmolded polymer layer on gear housing structure. In Rafferty et al. '376, various components, such as the housing of the bearing assembly, the coupling cover, the vanes, are molded from the noted composite, and then assembled into the desired supporting structure. There is no overmolding, nor is there an overmolded polymer layer on the gear housing structure, as required by amended claim 1. Consideration and allowance of claim 1 is earnestly solicited.

Amended claim 6 requires a polymer layer overmolded around and surrounding the gear housing structure. This is not taught in the references, including in combination.

Amended claim 12 requires that the thermal coefficient of expansion of the metallic gear housing structure is generally similar to the thermal coefficient of expansion of the polymer layer. As noted in the specification, page 6, lines 9+, this inhibits the

detachment of the polymer layer from the outer surface of the metallic gear case as a result of thermal expansions and contractions of the combined structure. If the thermal coefficients of the metallic gear case and the polymer layer differ by a significant amount, repeated expansions and contractions can result in a detachment of the polymer layer from the surface of the metallic gear case. Claim 12 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Takasaki et al. '821. The Examiner notes that Takasaki et al. '821 discloses all of the claimed features except for the use of a gear housing structure with a thermal coefficient of expansion that is generally similar to a thermal coefficient of expansion of a polymer layer, and that the use of a polymer layer with a thermal coefficient of expansion that is similar to a thermal coefficient of expansion of a metallic part would be considered by one of ordinary skill in the art to be a design choice. In response, applicant respectfully notes MPEP 2144.03 indicating "the rationale supporting an obviousness rejection may be based on common knowledge in the art or 'well-known' prior art" and "the Examiner may take official notice of facts outside of the record which are capable of instant and unquestionable demonstration as being 'well-known' in the art" and "if justified, the Examiner should not be obliged to spend time to produce documentary proof" and "if the knowledge is of such notorious character that official notice can be taken, it is sufficient so to state". However, MPEP 2144.03 also notes, second paragraph, last sentence, "if the applicant traverses such an assertion the Examiner should cite a reference in support of his or her position". Applicant hereby respectfully but vigorously traverses such assertion by the Examiner. In view of the advantages and enhanced performance afforded by the invention set forth in claim 12, as noted above, it is respectfully submitted that the combination defined in claim 12 is not obvious. The matching of thermal coefficients of expansion of two members is in and of itself known in the prior art. However, there is no teaching in the prior art of a marine propulsion device comprising in combination a metallic gear housing structure, a polymer layer disposed on an outer surface of the gear housing structure, and further wherein the thermal coefficient of expansion of the metallic gear housing structure is

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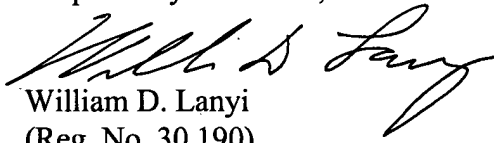
generally similar to the thermal coefficient of expansion of the polymer layer.

Consideration and allowance of the combination defined in claim 12 is earnestly solicited.

The remaining claims depend from parent claims which are believed allowable, and further define subcombinations which are believed allowable.

It is believed that this application is in condition for allowance with claims 1-15, 18, 23, and such action is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,



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